

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SS SP MR AG

SUBJECT: KING HASSAN'S COMMENTS ON SAHARA

1. DURING AUDIENCE JAN 8 LARGELY DEVOTED TO ANGOLA (SEPTTEL), KING COMMENTED ON CURRENT SITUATION IN THE SAHARA. KING PLACED SAHARA IN CONTEXT OF BROAD, LONG-TERM COMMUNIST STRATEGY FOR INFILTRATION OF AFRICA OF WHICH ANGOLA PROBLEM ONLY FIRST PHASE.

2. ASSESSING ALGERIAN INTENTIONS, KING SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WOULD BE A DIRECT ALGERIAN MILITARY ATTACK IN THE NEAR FUTURE -- THAT IS, OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS -- AS "SOME OBSERVERS" PREDICTED. HE BELIEVED INSTEAD THAT ALGERIA WOULD CONTINUE TO OPPOSE MOROCCO IN SAHARA THROUGH POLISARIO GUERRILLAS. HE NOTED THAT MOROCCANS HAD FOUND FEWER SAHARANS AND MORE ALGERIANS AMONG GUERRILLAS CAPTURED IN SAHARA RECENTLY. HE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THE POLISARIO BECOME "MULTI-RACIAL AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS", HE COMMENTED. SMALL ARMS CAPTURED WITH POLISARIO GUERRILLAS HAD BORNE ALGERIAN MARKINGS AND HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN TAKEN FROM ALGERIAN ARMY STOCKS, HE INDICATED. WHILE POLISARIO HAD ONLY SMALL ARMS AT PRESENT, THERE MIGHT WELL BE TANKS IN THE FUTURE, HE PREDICTED, SEEING DANGER THAT A SITUATION SIMILAR TO THAT IN ANGOLA COULD

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EVENTUALLY DEVELOP. GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SAHARA

AND ANGOLA, HOWEVER, MADE GUERRILLA WARFARE MORE DIFFICULT IN SAHARA; GUERRILLAS HAD TO FACE VERY INHOSPITABLE CONDITIONS THERE, INCLUDING INADEQUATE SOURCES OF WATER, AND IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO BE RE-SUPPLIED FROM THE SEA. MOROCCO WOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE THE POLISARIO, HE STATED WITH CONVICTION.

3. ALGERIA THOUGHT GUERRILLA WARFARE IN SAHARA WOULD WEAR DOWN MOROCCO, KING CONTINUED, BUT IN HIS VIEW IT WOULD WEAR DOWN ALGERIA INSTEAD; SAHARA COULD WELL BECOME FOR BOUMEDIENE WHAT YEMEN HAD BECOME FOR NASSER. MOROCCANS WERE FIGHTING IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY, HE ELABORATED, WHILE THE ALGERIANS WERE FIGHTING ABROAD. AS LONG AS ALGERIA AND THE SOVIETS WERE THE ONLY ONES HELPING THE POLISARIO, MOROCCO WOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE SITUATION, HE SUMMED UP, BUT MOROCCO WAS NOT READY TO CONFRONT THE "WHOLE SOCIALIST WORLD".

4. TURNING TO MAURITANIA, KING SAID HIS REAL CONCERN STEMMED FROM MAURITANIAN WEAKNESS. MAURITANIA HAD ONLY 2,000 SOLDIERS UNDER ARMS AND SUBVERSION WITHIN THE COUNTRY WAS POSSIBLE. COMMENTING THAT THIS INFORMATION WAS "TOP SECRET", HE RELATED THAT OULD DADDAH HAD ASKED HIM TO BE PREPARED TO STATION TROOPS IN MAURITANIA IN CASE OF NEED. MOROCCO HAD AGREED TO STAND BY TO IMPLEMENT THIS ARRANGEMENT IF AND WHEN OULD DADDAH GAVE THE SIGNAL. THIS WAS A CONTINGENCY THAT BOTH SIDES PREFERRED TO AVOID, KING INDICATED.

5. BOUMEDIENE HAD REALLY GONE TOO FAR, KING CONCLUDED. BOUMEDIENE WAS NOW "RE-SHUFFLING MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICAN CARDS", WITH SOVIET PARTICIPATION, AND MAKING COMMON CAUSE WITH THE REJECTION FRONT. IN THE BARGAIN, BOUMEDIENE WAS NOW RECEIVING MIRAGE AIRCRAFT. (KING WAS PRESUMABLY REFERRING TO LIBYA AS THE SOURCE) AS WELL AS T-62 TANKS, HE NOTED.

6. KING THEN WENT ON TO EXPRESS STRONG HOPE FOR INCREASED AMERICAN SUPPORT IN LIGHT OF THREATENING CIRCUMSTANCES HE HAD DESCRIBED (SEPTTEL.
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